

Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

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C O N F I D E N T I A L MAPUTO 0068

E.O.11652: GDS
TAGS: PINS, SOPN, MZ, RH
SUBJECT: TIME CORRESPONDENT INTERVIEWS MACHEL: MOZAMBIQUE'S CHANGING
ATTITUDE TOWARD WESTERN PRESS

1. SUMMARY PRESIDENT MACHEL GIVES EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW
TO TIME AND AP CORRESPONDENTS JANUARY 12. MOZAMBIQUE
OFFICIALS ACKNOWLEDGE CHANGED ATTITUDE TOWARD WESTERN AND
AMERICAN JOURNALISTS. AS FAR AS WE ARE AWARE THIS IS FIRST
TIME MACHEL HAS GRANTED AMERICAN JOURNALIST AN EXCLUSIVE
INTERVIEW. END SUMMARY.
2. EMBOFF HAD OPPORTUNITY TO SPEAK BRIEFLY WITH TIME CORRESPONDENT
DAVID WOOD AND AP CORRESPONDENT BRIAN JEFFERIES
SHORTLY BEFORE THEIR DEPARTURE JANUARY 13. WOOD AND JEFF-
ERIES WERE IN COMPANY OF PRESIDENTIAL ASSISTANT (AND
PRESIDENTIAL TRANSLATOR) FERNANDO HONWANA AND MOZAMBIQUE
INFORMATION AGENCY DIRECTOR MURADAI MAMADHUSSEN.
3. WOOD INDICATED THAT HE AND JEFFERIES HAD INTERVIEWED
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PRESIDENT MACHEL FOR APPROXIMATELY TWO HOURS LATE EVENING
OF JANUARY 12. ALTHOUGH CIRCUMSTANCES DID NOT PERMIT WOOD
TO GIVE EMBOFF FULL REPORT OF SUBSTANCE OF INTERVIEW. HE
SAID MEETING WITH MACHEL HAD GONE EXTREMELY WELL AND
THAT HE (WOOD) HAD COME AWAY IMPRESSED BY MACHEL'S TOUGH-
NESS AND INTELLECT. DURING INTERVIEW, MACHEL AFFIRMED HIS
SUPPORT FOR ANGLO-AMERICAN PLAN AS BASIS FOR SETTLEMENT IN

RHODESIA, ACKNOWLEDGED THAT THERE WERE A NUMBER OR RE-EDUCATION CAMPS IN MOZAMBIQUE BUT CHARACTERIZED THEM AS PLACES TO "REHABILITATE" COMMON CRIMINALS AND SOCIAL DERELICTS, AND CRITICIZED WOOD FOR BEING OVERLY CONCERNED WHETHER MOZAMBIQUE WOULD INVITE THE CUBANS TO HELP MOZAMBIQUE DEFEND ITS BORDERS. BOTH WOOD AND JEFFERIES SAID THEY PLAN TO FILE COMPLETE STORIES ON THEIR INTERVIEW, AS WELL AS THEIR TRIPS TO THE UNHCR-REFUGEE CAMP AT DOROI AND THE ZANU "FAMILY CAMP" AT TEMBUE IN TETE PROVINCE.

4. HONWANA AND MURADALI ACKNOWLEDGE THAT MOZAMBIQUE GOVERNMENT HAS ALTERED IT POLICIES TOWARD WESTERN (AND PARTICULARLY AMERICAN) JOURNALISTS. DURING MOZAMBIQUE'S FIRST TWO YEARS OF INDEPENDENCE, HONWANA SAID, THERE WAS A DELIBERATE POLICY TO EXCLUDE WESTERN JOURNALISTS UNLESS THEY WERE SYMPATHETIC AND WELL KNOWN TO FRELIMO, ABOUT SIX MONTHS AGO, A DECISION WAS TAKEN TO ALLOW AMERICAN AND WESTERN JOURNALISTS FROM ALL THE LEADING PAPERS AND MAGAZINES TO VISIT MOZAMBIQUE. AS A RESULT, JOURNALISTS FROM TIME, NEWSWEEK, THE WASHINGTON POST AND THE NEW YORK TIME HAD BEEN WELCOMED AND ALLOWED TO TRAVEL VIRTUALLY AND WHERE THEY WANTED IN THE COUNTRYSIDE.

5. HONWANA AND MURADALI SAID THAT DECISION TO OPEN MOZAMBIQUE'S DOORS TO WESTERN CORRESPONDENTS WAS TAKEN AFTER MUCH DEBATE SINCE THERE ARE A NUMBER OF PEOPLE IN THE CONFIDENTIAL

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GOVERNMENT WHO ARE "PARANOID" ABOUT THE WESTERN PRESS AND ARE "STRONGLY OPPOSED TO WESTERN MEDIA" IN GENERAL. MURADALI SAID MOZAMBIQUE'S NEW PRESS POLICY HAS BEEN SUCCESSFUL AND CITED FAVORABLE ARTICLES ON MOZAMBIQUE WRITTEN BY OTTAWAY OF THE POST AND KAUFFMAN OF THE NEW YORK TIMES. HONWANA POINTED OUT THAT THESE STORIES GO A LONG WAY TOWARD EXPLAINING WHAT FRELIMO IS TRYING TO ACHIEVE, AS WELL AS DEBUNKING FALSE IMPRESSIONS ABOUT MOZAMBIQUE IN U.S. AND ELSEWHERE.

5. COMMENT: MOZAMBIQUE NEW PRESS POLICY IS FURTHER EVIDENCE OF MORE GENERAL GPRM DECISION TO EXPAND ITS RELATIONS BEYOND ITS SO CALLED "NATURAL ALLIES", (I.E. ITS COMMUNIST AND SOCIALISTS FRIENDS). THE WEST IS OBVIOUSLY THE BENEFICIARY OF THIS NEW POLICY. UNDOUBTEDLY THERE WILL BE OCCASIONS WHEN THE GPRM MAY REGRET OPENING ITS DOORS TO THE WESTERN PRESS. ON BALANCE, HOWEVER, WE BELIEVE THE MORE OPEN POLICY WILL BENEFIT MOZAMBIQUE BY CORRECTING SOME OF THE DISTORTION AND NEGATIVE REPORTING. WHICH HAS CHARACTERIZED SOUTHERN AFRICAN AND SOME WESTERN REPORTING ON MOZAMBIQUE.

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